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*Two Discourses,*  
Whereof the *First* is, an  
**EXHORTATION**  
To the Strict Observance of  
**Ash-Wednesday.**  
The Second, a  
**DEFENCE**  
Of those who keep  
**LENT,**  
And observe the other  
**Fasts of the CHURCH.**

In Answer to a **DIVINE**, who ask'd  
the Author why he kept **Lent**.

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Recommended in a **PREFACE** by  
**Dr. GEORGE HICKES.**

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**L O N D O N,**  
Printed for **W. CARTER**, at the *Green*  
*Dragon* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1708.

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T O

*Robert Nelson Esq;*

S I R,

**Y**ou'll easily imagine it  
was your Companion of  
the Festivals and Fasts of  
the Church of England,  
which Invited me to present these  
Two plain Discourses, relating to  
the latter, in so publick a manner,  
to you.

I must own my self to be one,  
among the many thousands, who  
A 3 have

## *The Epistle*

have a great Value for that most excellent Work, which God gave you a Will, and Ability to make, at a time when the Institutions of the Church, and particularly the observation of the *Fasts* appointed by her, and her Clergy, and their Sacerdotal Authority were growing into Contempt.

God seemeth to have raised you up for this purpose, that he might shew his Gifts in you, and make you an Instructor of the People in a most degenerate Age, when every thing that is written by any one of us in behalf of the Church as a Spiritual Society, or the Pastoral Authority of her Governours, or the Obedience which is due to their Orders for  
Christ's



## *Dedictory.*

Christ's sake, whose Ministers they are, are suspected, and despised, for the same reason, that in the best, and purest times, they were receiv'd with Veneration, because they are written by a Priest.

But you, Sir, in your *Companion for the Fasts*, have not only taught the People Primitive Antiquity, and the great usefulness of Weekly, and Annual Times of Fasting, and Abstinence appointed by the Church; but in your tenth Chapter of the *Ember Days*, you have shewn them that the Church is a *Spiritual Society*, wherein some Govern, and others are Governed; and that it is the Duty of all *Lay-Christians* to Honour, and Esteem

A 4

the

## *The Epistle*

the *Clergy*, to treat them with *Reverence*, to love them, to provide for their *Maintenance*, to Pray for them, and to obey them as *Spiritual Governours*, who have receiv'd their *Authority* from *Christ*.

You can have no particular Interest, or Design in telling the People these Primitive Truths; and for this Reason, as your Book hath already been much better receiv'd in Four Editions among the People of all Ranks, and Professions; so, by the blessing of God, hath it had great effect among them, and prevented the Poisoning of great Numbers by those pernicious Books, which, to the Dishonour of Christianity, are as publickly Sold, and Read as the  
*Bible*

## *Dedictory.*

*Bible* it self; though they teach the People that the *Priesthood* is a *Cheat*, and *Usurpation*; and *Religion* nothing but *Priest-Craft*.

Great therefore, Sir, will be your Reward from God, and his *Christ*, the *High-Priest* of our Profession in *Heaven*; and great are the Acknowledgments which all good Christians, and we of the *Clergy* more especially, ought to make to you; and therefore, Sir, as this little Book is a particular acknowledgment of my share of the publick thanks that are due to you; so I beg your Acceptance and Patronage of it, though of so mean and vulgar a Composure, suited to the vulgar *Diction* and  
*Genius*

## *The Epistle*

*Genius* of those, to whom the Discourses in it were spoken.

Alas! Sir, we of the Clergy, who live at so great a distance from those Places, where Speech, as well as Conversation is polished to the highest degree, must adapt our Words, and Phrases, and the whole stile of our Discourses to the usage of our Country, as well as Capacity of our Country Auditors; who otherwise would not only hardly understand, but be apt to despise the truly pure, sublime, and correct Eloquence, to which they are not accustomed, and be rather amazed, and frightened, than instructed with it, as the Wife of  
Stolo,



## *Dedicatory.*

*Stolo*, the Roman Plebeian, was with the sound of the *Lictorian Rods*; the uncouth rattle of which, she told her Sister, who was Married to a Senator, offended her Household Gods.

In like manner, Sir, should we Country Divines speak to our People in a way, above what they speak to one another, our Speech would rather displease, than please them, and by consequence do them little good: For this Reason, Sir, we are obliged in Conscience to preach to them in the same Language that they speak to one another: As, I doubt not, the *Priests* of the *Greek*, and *Latin Church*, though perhaps born and bred at *Athens*, and *Rome*,  
preach'd

## The Epistle

preach'd to the Country Christians; the former to the *Dores*, or *Arcadians*, as we are sure the latter did to the *Rustick Romans*; especially in the *Provinces*: not in the *Attick*, nor in the *Roman Purity*, but, it may be, in such Language as would have been thought barbarous at *Athens*, or *Rome*.

Sir, you'll easily perceive I have made this Observation by way of Apology for my own Country Style, consisting of vulgar Phrases, and Popular Figures, and Repetitions in the following Discourses; not only in that to the *People*, about the Religious Observation of *Ash-Wednesday*, but in that to the *Clergy-Man* of my own Order; to whom being used, as  
I am,

## *Dedictory.*

I am, to the Dialect of our Country; I thought it not improper to Write in the unpolite Country fashion, in which I have been long used to Preach unto my People.

Sir, you, who are so well acquainted with this Licentious Age, will not wonder that a Priest of the *Church of England* should oppose the Observation of her *Fasts*; but alas! Sir, I speak it with Sorrow, the Poyson of *Latitude* hath spread it self too much every where among the *Clergy*, by which they have brought the *Church*, and our *Ministry* into danger, and the *Three Holy Orders* into contempt; and where this Liberty of *Thinking*, and *Writing*, and removing

## *The Epistle*

moving the old Land-marks will end, if God, and our Governors do not put a stop to it; it is easie, without the Spirit of Prophecy, to foretell.

But, Sir, it shall be my constant Prayer to God, as I am confident it is yours, that he would inspire both our Spiritual, and Temporal Governours with a constant Resolution becoming their High Stations, to Rebuke this Evil Spirit of *Latitude* that is gone out into the World, and thereby secure the old truly Catholick Principles, which only can secure Christianity, both as a Society, and a Sect, against *Deism*, and the Evil Demons, which inspire the *Deists*,  
the



## *Dedictory.*

the Adversaries of all revealed Religion.

Sir, I pray God long to preserve you, for the *Honour* of his *Name*, the Sake of his *Church*, and the Comfort of her *despised Priests*; amongst whom, Sir, none hath more Esteem for you, than

*Your Humble Servant.*

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# *A Table of the Vigils, Fasts, and Days of Abstinence, to be observ'd in the Year.*

|                                |   |                                                         |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------|
| The Evens, or<br>Vigils before | { | The Nativity of Our<br>LORD.                            |
|                                | { | The Purification of the<br>Blessed Virgin <i>Mary</i> . |
|                                | { | The Annunciation of<br>the Blessed Virgin.              |
|                                | { | <i>Easter-Day</i> .                                     |
|                                | { | <i>Ascension-Day</i> .                                  |
|                                | { | <i>Pentecost</i> .                                      |
|                                | { | <i>St. Matthias</i> .                                   |
|                                | { | <i>St. John Baptist</i> .                               |
|                                | { | <i>St. Peter</i> .                                      |
|                                | { | <i>St. James</i> .                                      |
|                                | { | <i>St. Bartholomew</i> .                                |
|                                | { | <i>St. Matthew</i> .                                    |
|                                | { | <i>St. Simon</i> and <i>St. Jude</i> .                  |
|                                | { | <i>St. Andrew</i> .                                     |
|                                | { | <i>St. Thomas</i> .                                     |
|                                | { | <i>All-Saints</i> .                                     |

*Note*, That if any of these Feast-days fall upon  
a *Monday*, then the Vigil, or Fast-day, shall be  
kept upon the *Saturday*, and not upon the  
*Sunday* next before it.

*Other Days to be Observ'd with Fasting  
or Abstinence.*

I. The Forty Days of *Lent* : (of which *Asb-Wednesday* is the first. )

II. The Ember-days at the four Seasons, being the *Wednesday*, *Friday*, and *Saturday* after the First *Sunday* in *Lent*. After the Feast of *Pentecost*. After *September* xiv. After *December* xv.

III. The Rogation-days, being the *Monday*, *Tuesday*, and *Wednesday* before *H. Thursday*, or the Ascension of Our LORD.

IV. All the *Fridays* in the Year : unless when *Christmas-Day* falls upon a *Friday*.

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## TO THE READER.

**T**HE Two following Discourses  
were sent to me by the Worthy  
Author, who is a Beneficed Clergy-  
Man in the Country, whom I never  
saw, and who is no otherwise known  
to me, than by the Good Name, and  
Reputation which he deservedly hath in  
those Parts, where he Lives. He de-  
sired me to peruse them, and was  
pleased to submit them to my Censure,  
and gave me Commission to Publish,  
or Suppress them, as I judged fit. In  
Reading of them I had much satis-  
faction,

2 2

## To the Reader.

saction, being pleas'd with the simplicity of his humble popular Style, fit for Vulgar Auditories; and that Primitive Ardour which he shews, in both of them, for Devotion, particularly for the severer Devotions of the Penitential sort, and in order thereunto, to recover the publick Practice of them, for observing the long-neglected times of Fasting, and Abstinence appointed by the Church. An Attempt of this nature to retrieve the observation of Fasting Times is Commendable, and Noble, what Success soever it may have; and acceptable, without doubt, to God, and good Men, because the observation of them, though grown almost into utter disuse, is very serviceable to the great Ends of Religion, as this Author hath shewn, particularly in fitting of us to bear the Crosses, and  
Per-

## To the Reader.

*Persecutions which may arise at any time, or of any sort: And let me add, to take away the Reproach with which our Adversaries justly reproach the generality of us, for living without intervals of Religious Abstinence, and Fasting, in constant Ease, and Fulness, and despising the wholesome Orders of the Church, in which we expect to be saved.*

*In the First Discourse he argues like a Faithful Minister of the Church, for the solemn observation of Ash-Wednesday; and in the Second, for the keeping of Lent, and other Church-Fasts; and the Logick of his Arguments is attended with such a Religious force of Expression, and such a Spirit of pure Holy Zeal breaths through the composure of them both,*

## To the Reader.

that I am perswaded every truly serious, and humble Reader will find himself disposed to surrender himself to the Conviction he will find in them, as I understand many of his Country Auditors have done, who have not yet had the benefit of reading of them.

The Readers of the weaker sort must not wonder, much less take any dangerous offence at the Holy Order of Priests, to find by the Second Discourse, that a Clergy-Man should despise the Fasts of the Church, or argue against the observation of them, and ridicule those, who observe them. And that they may not be offended to such a degree, let them give me leave to put them in remembrance, that their Priests are Men, and not Angels; Men that are subject to the same Passions



## To the Reader.

sions that other Christian Men are, and that Holy Orders neither by their own Nature, nor by Vertue of any Promise of GOD, can make Men Wise or Good, or secure them, when Ordained, against any Temptations, if they will give up themselves to any of the Three great Tempters, which when they do, their Holy Character will not preserve the Rectitude of their Faculties, neither of their Understandings in a Love of Truth, nor of their Wills in a Love of Goodness, from both of which, in all Ages, more, or less, Priests have fallen, as well as private Men, in the Church. This the Learned know from Ecclesiastical Histories, and the very Canons of the Church; which I am willing to observe, for the sake of those, who are so apt every where to take Scandal, not only at the Clergy

## To the Reader.

upon the score of Evil Clergy-men, but at Religion it self, when they should rather bewail the Falls, or Failings of any of them, pray God to Re-form them, when they see their Faults, or hear of them, and call to remembrance the Fall of the Angels in Heaven; of our first Parents in Paradise; of Solomon in his Glory; of the Jewish Priests under the first, as well as second Temple; of Judas among the Apostles, and of the Angels of the Seven Churches, who were chosen by designation of the Holy Ghost, and every one whereof, except one, whom learned Men think to have been St. Polycarp, is Charg'd with some Faults.

They should consider, that arguing against the Priesthood for the Faults of Priests, is the same false Logick, as  
to

## To the Reader.

to argue against Christianity for the Faults of Christians, and must end, as some most Wicked Men design it should, in driving Christianity, and the very Name of Christ out of the World.

I have taken this Occasion to lay these Thoughts before those, who are apt to be carried too far in the Offences they take against Clergy-men, for the Miscarriages of too many who are Blameable among them, without taking notice of the Unblameable, who every where adorn their Christian, and Sacerdotal Characters, or endeavouring to bring the others, who dishonour both, to the Censures they deserve, as the Primitive Christian People thought themselves bound in Conscience to do.

Wherefore let every one that would be a good Christian take care, that they never aggravate the Failings of Clergy-men

## To the Reader.

men beyond what is just, as the manner of too many is; or draw undue, and dangerous Consequences from the Failings of those among 'em, that need no Aggravation, lest they fall into a Snare.

If they know here, and there, One among 'em, who lives like an Epicure, even when he should fast, as that unhappy Minister to whom the Second Discourse is address'd; or, at any time are told of one, who is a Favourer, or Vender of false Doctrines, or false to his own Order, and Profession, and to the Church of which he is a Bishop, or Priest; or if perhaps they should know, or hear of some few, like those of the late Surrey Club, who are Enemies to all reveal'd Religion, and make no difficulty to speak of Christ with as much contempt, if not with as much malice, as the Jews did:



## To the Reader.

did: let them not be startled at it, because these things happen for their Probation, and ought to have no other effect upon them, but to make them abhor such Blasphemers, as the People did Paulus Bishop of Antioch, and endeavour to get 'em degraded, or depos'd. But to draw other Consequences from the Miscarriages of Priests, is as dangerous, as 'tis unreasonable. To infer from thence, as People are now openly taught to do, that Priesthood is a Cheat, and Religion a mere Contrivance of Priests, is an Inconsequence as malicious, as blasphemous, which deserves to be confuted by the Ax, and the Rods.

They are the Atheists, and Deists among us more especially, who love to magnifie the common Infirmities of Priests, that argue in this fallacious  
man-

## To the Reader.

manner among our young Gentlemen, to corrupt 'em into Scepticism, and Unbelief; for they know very well, if by this Sophistry they can once bring them to a contempt of the Priesthood, and to suspect, and hate Priests, they can soon bring 'em to be of their Party; whose Design, as their Books shew, is to extirpate the Christian Priesthood, and Religion with it, out of the World. In order to this design, they tell the World openly, and, as they think, very artfully, That the best Religion hath the worst Priests. This we have had repeated again and again, in defamation of the Clergy, as an Expression of pungent Wit, tho' there is no Wit, but mere Impudence in the misapplication of an old Italian Proverb, *Bona terra, Cativi gente*, the best Country hath the worst People: And so they would say  
if

## To the Reader.

if it serv'd their turn, That the best Monarchy hath the worst Monarchs; the best Law the worst Judges; the best Universities the worst Scholars; and the best Religion (not only the worst Priests, but) the worst People. Yet this, and such like, is the paultry Wit, the poor paultry Wit pointed with Satyr against the Clergy, with which too many are pleas'd, and led captive to their own destruction.

When I hear of a young Gentleman carried off so far with this illnatur'd false Wit from his Education, as to delight in speaking against the Universities, and the Clergy, and to make railing at them the common place of his conversation; when he once begins with Priest-ridden, I then guess whither he is going, and look upon him with great pity, as abandon'd to good Sense.

## To the Reader.

*Sense, and in danger of being quite lost.*

*I have taken this Occasion of speaking what, I think, is reasonable to the People of the Church of England, by way of Apology for the Clergy. There is, as there ever was in all Churches, some Spots among them, but the Wise, and Well-dispos'd among the Laity, will, I hope, consider what I have here suggested, and be always more ready to look upon the Good, than the Bad of the H. Orders, and to give G O D Thanks for such as the pious Author of these Discourses, who is True, and Faithful to his Great Master, and His Business, and for many Years hath heartily endeavour'd by Example, as well as Doctrine, to conduct his Country-Flock to Heaven, and in order there-  
unto;*



## To the Reader.

unto, to train them up in a Veneration  
for the Priesthood, and a conscientious  
Obedience to the Orders of the Church.  
He acts in all things, as one, who believes  
he must give an Account, and who trusts  
at the Great Day to hear his LORD  
say unto him, Come thou good,  
and faithful Servant, enter Thou  
into the Joy of thy Lord.

Geo. Hickes.

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6 AP 58

A  
 Persuasive to Repentance.  
 BEING A  
 DISCOURSE  
 UPON  
*Ash-Wednesday,*  
 OR,  
*The First Day of Lent ;*

Spoken in the Desk, to a very plain Country  
 Congregation, at the bidding of it, the *Sunday*  
 before, being *Febr. 15. 1702.*

**I** Am to acquaint you, That in  
 Obedience to the *Commands*,  
 Conformity to the *Practise*, and  
 Submission to the *Wisdom* of  
 the *Holy Catholick Church* in al-  
 most all Ages, but especially of our  
 own Dear and Holy Mother, the  
 CHURCH of ENGLAND in particu-  
 lar ; on *Wednesday* next we are to keep  
 B the

2    **A Discourse on Ash-Wednesday,**  
the *First Day of Lent*, commonly call'd  
*Ash-Wednesday*; a Day of *Fasting* and  
*Humiliation*, Publick Prayer, and Repen-  
tance.

Here, my Brethren, give me leave  
to stop a little, and (to speak to you  
in the Words of the Apostle, *Heb.*  
*xiii. 23.*) *I beseech you, suffer a Word of*  
*Exhortation*:

For there are *four Things*, which I  
would consider, and Affectionately  
lay before you.

- I. The *Meaning* of the Day, or the  
Reason, why it is to be ob-  
serv'd.
- II. How far 'tis from being *Popery*,  
either in the *Institution* or *Obser-*  
*vation* of it.
- III. What the *Meaning* is of *Cursed*  
are such, or such *Sinners*; and  
of our answering, *Amen*.
- IV. Why



IV. Why I am so desirous to see you here on *that Day*, the First and Great Day of the *Lenten Fast*.

I. *The Meaning of the Day.*

'Tis (as I said before) a Solemn Day appointed for *Publick Humiliation* and *Repentance*. And here, methinks, I hear you ask, What Scriptures have you for the Appointment of it?

I answer; Very many: For all the Scriptures that speak for *Religious Fasting*, *Penitential Humiliations* or *Devotions*, and *Repentance*; All these are for it.

Well; but for *Asb-Wednesday* in particular, what Scripture have you? What's the meaning here of *Asb* and *Asbes*?

To this I answer:

I. From the *Old Testament*.

II. From the *New*.

#### 4 A Discourse on Ash-Wednesday,

First, From the *Old*:

It was the Custom of old, that in Days of Mourning, and Fasting, and Humiliation, they laid aside their better Garments, and put on Sack-cloth, and cast *Ashes* on their Heads, (or sate in *Ashes*) as Tokens of their Humiliation, and acknowledging themselves to be *Sinful Dust and Ashes*.

Thus *Job* 42. 6. *I abhor my self, and Repent in Dust and Ashes.*

Thus when *Nineveh* was threaten'd to be destroy'd, *Jon.* 3. 6. *The King of Nineveh arose from his Throne, and laid his Robe from him, and covered him with Sack-cloth, and sate in Ashes.*

Here is much of *Ash-Wednesday*, I mean, Proof enough of Humiliation and Repentance in *Sack-cloth and Ashes*; in the *Old Testament*.

But have you as plain Proof in the *New* ?

Yes indeed; and that from the very Words of our Saviour himself.

Thus, *St. Matth.* 11. 21. *Woe unto thee Chorazin; woe unto thee Bethsaida; for if the mighty Works which were done in*

in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sack-cloth and Ashes.

So also to the very same purpose, and almost in the same Words, St. Luke, x. 13.

So Jam. iv. 9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. So Vers. 10. Humble your selves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. So Chap. v. 1. Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries—

But (you'll say) why don't ye then in your Day of Repentance and Humiliation, put on Sack-cloth, and throw Ashes on your Heads, or sit in Ashes?

I answer:

I. The Primitive Jewish Christians did so, as appears from the Texts just now cited out of \* St. James.

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\* Grot. on Jam. iv. 9. Affligete vosmet ipsos Jejunis, & aliis corporis *σληγαγωγίαις*: *πενθήσαις* *לבוש* lugubrem habitum induite, saccum & cilicia, ut pœnitentes Christiani solebant. Hæc enim est vis istius vocis ut videre est. Genes. xxxvii. 34. 2 Sam. xiii. 37. & xix. 2.

II. The Christians in after-times, when the Gentiles came into it, discontinued the Jewish Ceremony, passing from the *Letter* to the *Spirit*; and therefore our Church hath thought fit to do so too: But the *Spiritual* part, that is, *Penitential Humiliations* of the Soul, *Religious Abstinence* or *Fasting*, publick *Devotion*, and profession of *Repentance*, you'll all own, are still to be continued, in their proper *Times* and *Seasons*, tho' we do not use Sack-cloth and Ashes.

And if on *some Day*, why not on *that Day*, in which we can joyn with so many multitudes of our Christian Brethren, throughout the Christian World?

Why not on the Day in which we can shew both our *Love* and our *Obedience* to the Church?

For, (what's never enough consider'd) as *Charity is the Bond of Perfection*, and which St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii.) reckons as chief of all the Christian Graces, so this Perfect Virtue is then in its *Perfection*, when it is shewn to  
the



the *whole Body* of the Church, rather than to any *particular Christian*, or any individual Member thereof.

If we ever keep the Annual Return of a Day of *Publick Repentance*, Blessed Jesu! when can we do it better, than when *thy Spouse* the Church, throughout the World, is beginning piously to recount thy Fasting *forty Days and forty Nights*? Let us go along with *Thee* and *Her* in it, or follow *Thee* in it, though it be but a *little way*, and Thou wilt shortly reach out Thy Hand, and pull us home to *Thee*.

Blessed Master! This too we are sure of; we can exercise so many Virtues besides in the doing it, as, *Unity, Peace, Humility, Meekness of Understanding, Charity, and Obedience* to thy Church; and all this at the same time when we are actually engaged in, or exercising Acts of *Faith and Repentance, Love and Obedience* towards thy self.

Come then, my dear Brethren, whatever others intend to do, let us share in

8    **A Discourse on Ash-Wednesday,**

the publick Intercessions of the Church. Let us put our *Hearts* and *Hands* to the Petitions of the *Church Militant* below, who hope, one Day, to joyn *Hearts* and *Voices* with the *Church Triumphant* above.

Let us (in a holy Meditation) look upon Jesus almost *Naked* upon the Cross, and then no more be *asham'd* of our Duty; no longer be *asham'd* of *Religious Abstinence*, or *frighted* and *jeer'd* out of the *Care of our Souls*; but thank Him, that we have any thing to *lose* for him, or that we are accounted *worthy* to be *Reproach'd* for him.

II. *How far it is from being Popery, either in the Institution or Observation of it.*

'Tis a Plot the Devil has against Religion, to call this, and other Institutions of the Church *Popery*, which are not so; and I assure you there is no such thing in it.

For,

For, pray consider.

*Religious Fasting, or Abstinence*, is a Gospel Institution, and no part of Popery, as such.

*Penitential Humiliations* are Gospel Actions; no Actions of Popery, as such, but of the *Christian Religion*, as far as it is common to Papists, as well as to us.

*Holy Devotions* are Evangelical Duties, and no part of those Corruptions in which Popery doth consist.

*Repentance* also is a Gospel Duty, but no part of Popery as Popery, from which the Church is reform'd in every point.

Judge then your selves if these things, which are the Parts and Duties of our *common Christianity*, ought to be either thought or called Popery.

And yet *This* is all that the Church intends by *the Day*, viz. that when we have done any thing contrary to our Baptismal Vow, or holy Purposes and Resolutions since our last *Penitential Humiliations*, as 'tis too likely we may have done, especially in the late Festival

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val time, it being very easie at such times to fall into *faulty Excess*; then to make a Stop, and *recollect* our selves a little, and *see*, and *examine* wherein we have done amiss.

And seeing *that*, to Accuse, and Judge, and Condemn our selves: To Return to GOD with publick Demonstrations of *Repentance*: To Revenge that *Excess* with a proportionable *Abstinence*; (*Yea, what Revenge, 2 Cor. 7. 11.*) And then to go on in our *great Business*, which is, a *New and Better Obedience*.

No Popery sure in this: And no Time fitter than when we begin to think of the Solemnity of Receiving the Holy Sacrament at *Easter*. And then too to be a little *crucified with Christ*, (*Gal. 2. 20.*) when we begin to commemorate his *Fasting forty Days and forty Nights* for our sakes.

III. What's the meaning of *Cursed* are such or such *Sinners*, and of our answering, *Amen*?

. I an-



I answer.

Nothing but this : That you penitently own GOD's *Curse* to be *due* to the *Sin* : And if you have in any degrees or measures been *guilty*, you say, *Amen* ; that is, in most humble penitential manner you own, that the *Curse* of GOD is due to that *Sin* : So you Accuse your selves, if in any *Degrees* or *Instances* you are guilty of it. And Judge your selves, that you may not be judged by the Lord, 1 Cor. x. 31.

But does not a *Man* curse himself ? Or, How can he come to Church to keep this Day, and say *Amen*, if in *Thought*, *Word*, or *Action* he hath been guilty of any one of the *Sins* there mention'd ?

I answer.

So much the *sooner* for that : So much the more *Reason*, and so much the more *Necessity* there is for his coming ; and so much the more *Humility*,

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*lity, Piety, and Safety* there is in saying the penitential *Amen*; which, to Answer your Question, in this Office doth not signifie the same that it does in the end of a *Prayer*, that is, *So be it*, or, *Lord, grant this*; but it signifies, *This is true*; or, *So it is*; or, *Lord, I grant this*; *Lord, I own it to be true*; I humbly, and with a relenting Spirit, a broken and a contrite Heart, acknowledge thy Curse to be due to those who commit this Sin; I own this Curse to be due to my self, if I commit it.

In a word, it is an *Indicative*, and not an *Optative* A M E N; such an *Amen* as is at the end of your Creed, and not such an *Amen* as is at the end of Prayers; a meer *Declarative*, or *Affirming* Amen.

So that this, and nothing else but what follows, is or can be meant by saying *Amen* in this Office.

For Example.

*Priest*] Cursed is he that smiteth his Neighbour secretly!

*People*] *Amen.*

Which

02, The First day of Lent. 13

Which is to say, *This is certainly true*, and we own and acknowledge the Truth of it, and that the Wrath and Judgment of G O D is due to *every one*, who in any degree, by Thought, Word, or Deed, is guilty of this Sin. G O D be merciful to us, and every one of us, that deserve his Curse for this Sin; we here, in most humble penitential manner, acknowledge our Deserts; we accuse, judge, and condemn our selves, that we may not be judged by the L O R D, in the Great Day of revelation of the Righteous Judgments of our G O D.

O come then, my dearly-beloved Brethren, let us resolve, and prepare thus humbly, thus penitently, to come and *accuse* and *judge* our selves at our own Tribunal *here*, that our Compassionate Father looking down from the Mansions of Glory, and seeing us Confessing our Sins, and Acknowledging his Wrath to be due unto us, may spare us *hereafter*.

When

## 14 A Discourse on Ash-Wednesday,

When the *Prodigal* did this, his Father, *though he was yet a great way off, saw him, and had Compassion on him; St. Luke xv. 20.*

Come then, let us (whatever others intend to do) piously resolve like true Votaries, and her true Sons, to bear a part in the Commination of the Church, in her Prayers, and Fastings, and Sighs, and Tears, and humble our selves, as it were in Dust and Ashes, while the Anger and Judgments of GOD are denounced against Sin and Sinners on the *First Day of Lent*; and then, as true Penitents, flee from all such Vices, to which, with our own Mouths, we declare and affirm the Curse of GOD to be due.

Oh! let the Holy JESUS have our solemn Humiliation to Plead for us: Let him have our Fasting, and Prayers, and Sighs, and Tears, to present to his Father, and our Father, with his own meritorious Intercession; for he will be sure to make the *most* and the *best* of our holy Performances, if they proceed from an humble, contrite, sorrowful, and obedient Spirit,  
that



that is truly sensible of the direful nature of Sin.

Here I could say a great deal more, but I pass to my last Head of Discourse, to tell you my Friends and Fellow-Penitents,

IV. Why I am so desirous to see you here that Day, the *Caput Jejunii*, or First Day of the Great Fast.

I desire it for no *Reason*, (as I must answer it to GOD, in whose Presence I now stand, and to whom I must give an Account of all I here say or do) but to promote the Salvation of *your* Souls, as well as my *own*.

I know, as the World generally now is, I know, in these dregs of Time, how likely I am to bring Reproach upon my self, for being thus *Zealous* and *Earnest*, to perswade you to observe this Anniversary Day of solemn publick Repentance, appointed by the Church; but I despise all Reproach upon

16 **A Discourse on Ashi-Wednesday,**

upon such a good account; for, GOD assisting, I could be as content to die, (I hope) for the Honour of GOD, of Religion, and of His Church, and for the Promoting of *your Salvation*, and my *own*; as I should be to lie down to sleep.

We read; 1 Cor. 4. 2. *It is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.*

I. *Faithful* to our Master.

II. *Faithful* to his Spouse, the Church.

III. *Faithful* to the Souls of his Flock. And,

IV. *Faithful* to his *own*.

I have (I protest before GOD) *no other End* by speaking these things, and pressing them upon you, but my Desires to be *found Faithful* in every one of these respects.

And

And for this Reason let me say to you as our Saviour once said to his (then) sleepy Disciples, *St. Mat. xxvi. 40. What ! could you not watch with me one Hour ?* Can you not watch with your Minister who is to give an Account of your Souls, what ! cannot you watch with him, and with him glorifie your Heavenly Father for One Hour ?

When we have a *Publick Fast-day* commanded at other times, for a Blessing on *Kings* and *Parliaments*, *Fleets* and *Armies*, and the like, there is a National Interest in the Case ; there's a Secular View of *Success* and *Glory*, a Desire and Prospect of some *Temporal Blessing*, or Hopes of diverting some *Temporal Judgment*.

But on *this Day*, and in this Fast, no *Interest* or *Design* comes in, but what is *Spiritual*, the pure Exercise of *Publick Repentance* ; and by that, of the Divine Glory, the Salvation of Souls, and the Interests of Eternity ; and these unmix'd and uncompounded with *Worldly Desires* and *Designs*.

18 A Discourse on Ash-Wednesday,

For this cause there are Three forts of Enemies to this most *Holy Fast*.

I. Self-conceited Men.

II. Wicked and Impenitent Persons.

III. Evil Spirits.

I. Self-conceited Men, who think they know *Something*, but know *Nothing* as they ought to know; who think themselves *Wise*, but, according to the Apostle, are *Fools*.

1. Because they are *disobedient*, Tit. iii. 3.

2. Because they are *abominable* too, for being *disobedient*, Tit. i. 16.

3. They are Proud, and *know Nothing*, (1 Tim. vi. 4.) but *dote about Questions*: And, to make that *doting* worse and more criminal, 'tis about *Questions* of Things long since piously determin'd by the Authority of the Church.

But,



But, Blessed JESU! make them truly wise by *Poverty in Spirit*, by the Grace of *Humility*, and the Holy Virtue of *Charity*, (which is greater too when 'tis shewn to the whole Body of the Church, than when 'tis shewn to any particular Person) and then they'll hear thy Voice in the Call of the Church; and in *Penitential Humiliations* they'll acknowledge Her Voice and Language to be Thine, and in *Unity of Spirit*, in the *Bond of Communion and Peace* observe this, and all the other Religious Fasts, which She hath commanded Her Children to observe.

Then, and not till then, they'll Humbly, Penitently, and Devoutly keep this Fast with us, and with us obtain the Benefits of it, in the *Remission* of our Sins, which we confess with Shame, and bewail with Sorrow before GOD, who willeth *not the Death of a Sinner*, but that he should *turn from his wickedness, and live*.

But methinks I hear this sort of Men saying, What need is there of this Day of *Annual* and *Publick Repentance*? We must Repent *Daily*; Must we not?

I humbly and affectionately answer; Yes indeed, we must: But then, as there is *Publick* and *Private Prayer*, so there is *Publick* and *Private Repentance*, as to its Exercises, Acts, and Offices.

Shall the *Private Prayer* supersede the *Publick*? And in like manner, Shall the Exercises, Acts, and Offices of *Private Repentance* exclude those of the *Publick Repentance*? Shall the Duties of the Closet, or Family supersede those of the Parish or the Church?

Besides, Can every poor plain Person, that perhaps cannot read, perform his Penitential Exercises, and Devotions as well at Home, as when GOD's Minister, and your Guide, directs and helps him, and does it for *Himself* and *Him* too?

Come

Come then, dearly Beloved, consider these things with *Melting, Tender, and Relenting Spirits*; come, once more I beg you, see the *Piety* and the *Wisdom* of the CHURCH, in appointing this Penitential Day and Office. See, I pray you, the Usefulness of it, and cheerfully bear your Part in it. Do not fail to come, when you have one to go before you, and to go with you, to assist and joyn with you, in your Penitential Desires, and Endeavours of having an Offended Father reconciled to you.

## II. Wicked and Impenitent Persons are against it.

These, be sure, must be against all Days of *Publick Repentance*.

They'll scoff at it, and laugh at you, call it *Popish*, and seemingly despise you and it, tho' (perhaps) they inwardly revere it, and you for keeping of it.

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But still they'll go on, because all *their* Business lies in *this* World, and they are not concern'd for the *next*. Self-examination, and Recollection, Meditation on the Holy Nature of GOD, and the execrable Nature of Sin, and Preparatory Thoughts of that kind to Repentance, are strange to their Obdurate Souls: They'll trouble themselves with no such Cares, or interrupt the Pleasures of Life with such severe Speculations, or mortifying Practices, but go on till Death and Judgment overtakes them. And therefore 'tis no Wonder that this *second sort* of Men have any thing to do with such a severe Day of Penitence as *Ash-Wednesday*, or that with them.

No Wonder if these be *against* it, who, while they thus continue, and desire no *Benefit* by it, *shew* how little they are concern'd about their *Passage* out of the World, or what their Lot and Portion shall be on the other side of the Grave.

These



These Carnalists have no Notion of the World of Spirits, or conversing with pure and separate Intelligences: They never consider what *Good Angels* are, nor how they may make themselves equal to them, and help to fill those Seats, which the Apostate Spirits left vacant in Heaven.

III. Those *Evil Spirits* do therefore what they can to disgrace and defame the Observation of this, and other Penitential Fasts, because they would discourage Repentance, and all its *Acts* and *Exercises*, and have them quite laid aside,

Wherefore 'tis no Wonder that *Devils* and *Accursed Spirits* should be against *Repentance*, and particularly against the *Acts*, and *Offices*, and *Exercises* of *Publick Repentance*, on *Asb-Wednesday*, which I would entreat all poor missed Dissenters to consider, and other Men, who upon other Principles

ples are against observing of it; for they gratifie the Devil in setting themselves against it; they help to enlarge his Kingdom by opposing of it: For those Wicked Spirits are Enemies to all Self-denial, and Mortification; to all Austerities by *Fasting, Penitence,* and *Prayer*, and would have the Spirits of Men, like their own, unmortified, impenitent, unruly, disobedient, and their inferiour Powers Rebels to their Superiours, Reason subject to Sense, the Spirit to the Flesh, and the Church, and the whole Oeconomy of Salvation in it overthrown, with all the Means, and Methods, and Ministry, by which GOD hath determin'd to save Men.

Wherefore come, my dear Neighbours, be true to your Souls and the Means of Salvation, tho' never so unpleasant and cross to Sense; your Eternal Interest requires it, and Heaven and Immortal Life is an ample Recompense for all the severe Duties and Exercises of Repentance, by which you crucifie your selves to the *Flesh* and

and the *World*. They will make you less in love with the *World*, and much fitter to leave it. They will help to make Death comfortable to you, and your Passage from *this* to the *next* State more easie, and in the mean time conform you more and more after the Image of that CHRIST in whom you believe.

*These things I have told you, that when the Time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them, 1 Joh. xvi. 4. And that I may give in my Accounts of you, my Care, and Cure, with Joy, and not with Grief, Heb. xiii. 17.*

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F I N I S.

6 AP 58



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A  
DISCOURSE  
BETWEEN  
*Two Clergy-men,*  
Concerning keeping the  
Lenten Fast.

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A  
DISCOURSE  
BETWEEN  
*Two Clergy-men.*

S I R,

**Y**OU ask me, why I keep *Lent*,  
and the *Fasts* of the Church?

I answer.

I.

I. I do it as an Act of *Obedience*  
and *Love* to the Church, which not  
only Approves and Recommends, but  
Ap-

Appoints them to be kept ; and which, to my Conscience, hath the Force and Obligation of a Command. And then I am resolv'd to believe, that *to obey is better than Sacrifice* ; and *to hearken than the fat of Rams*, 1 Sam. xv. 22. So saith G O D by his Prophet in the Old Testament, and by his Apostle I am sure his Spirit commands, in the New, to *obey them that have the Rule over you, for they watch for your Souls*, Heb. xiii. 17.

## II.

II. I do it as an *Act of Self-denial and Discipline* ; to learn to deny my self *lawful* Pleasures and Enjoyments, that I may keep the safer distance from *unlawful* ones. No Man will be apt to impoverish and oppress his Brother, that can be content sometimes to hear his own Bowels croak for Bread, and go without it.

## III.



## III.

III. I do it as an *Act of Humiliation*; to express the Sense and Apprehension I have of my own *Vileness*, and of my being unworthy to enjoy any Good Thing from GOD, or to receive even my *daily Food* at his Hands.

## IV.

IV. I do it as an *Act of Holy Revenge* upon my self, for any (tho' the least) Excesses and Irregularities: 1 Cor. ix. 27. *But I keep under my Body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away.* For, when I refuse the Comforts I might lawfully enjoy, as a *Revenge* upon my self for any Comforts I have not lawfully enjoy'd, 'tis a kind of *undoing* of what I have *done*, as far as I can; a going contrary to, as well as a checking my self for any such irregular Action.

V. I do

## V.

V. I do it as an Act of *Penitential Accusing*, and Judging of my self, *that I may not be judged*, 1 Cor. xi. 31. I thus *smite my self*, that my tender Father seeing this, may not smite me with Severity hereafter: He will be the more apt to *spare me*, when He sees I do not *spare my self*.

## VI.

VI. I do it as an Act of *Religious Prudence*, (supposing it not to be a direct Duty, commanded or recommended for its self) it being exceedingly apt to make a Person *circumspect* and *wary*, *diligent* and *watchful*, over his Soul, according to that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 11. *What Carefulness it wrought in you!*

VII. I do

## VII.

VII. I do it from a Principle of *Fear* to encourage and entertain a Spirit of *Obstinacy*, and *Perverseness*; *Stubbornness*, and *Prophaneness*; from a pure conscientious Awe of becoming Refractory and Disobedient.

For when I consider the Disobediences of many People, in other matters, to the pious Institutions, and Appointments of the CHURCH, I often think upon the Words of the Apostle, *Tit. iii. 3.* how he ranks *Folly* and *Disobedience* together; *For we our selves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts.* First foolish, then disobedient; and no disobedient Persons are otherwise, how wise soever they may think themselves.

He that will not obey the Will of his pious and indulgent Superiours, just it is he should be given up to serve his own Lusts: And I generally find, that those Mens Appetites and

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Passions scorn to obey their Superiours, who by their own Disobedience have taught their Inferiour Powers to rebel.

And here also I have made another Observation, That many Mens Affections are so strongly set upon *Liberty* and *Pleasure*, that they make them invent or take up Opinions, to defend their own Wicked and Licitious Practices.

Besides, Sir, say what you will to me of my *submitting my Judgment* to my *Rightful Lawful Superiours*, and mis-call it (as long as you will) a *Blind Obedience*; I am sure, as there may be a *Lame* as well as a *Blind Sacrifice*: so I am satisfied there may be a *Lame* as well as a *Blind Obedience*; a *Blind* one generally is sincere; the *other* always is insincere, as well as imperfect.

And after all you can say, I believe you mistake in your Notions of Obedience: That which formally constitutes *Obedience*, is, when we do any thing for no other Reason, but because Commanded by Spiritual Superiours. To do any thing for other  
Ends,



Ends, for the Justice, Equity, or Goodness of it, may bring it under the Title of some other Virtue; *This* only, because *Commanded by our Spiritual Fathers*, makes it Obedience.

When I consider too, that the very First Disobedience was said to be in an Instance of *Eating*; and at the same time, how much GOD is pleas'd by an Abstemious Obedience, tho' but in a *Command of Man*, (*Jeremy xxxv.*) I will no more complain of a little Restraint in Diet, when it gives me a tender Thought of that *Disobedient Eating* that provoked GOD, and of that *Obedient Abstinence*, which so much pleas'd Him.

## VIII.

VIII. I do it as an *Act of Religious Prudence*, for another Reason; that is, to learn to *subdue my own Will*; to get the Victory, and Mastery over my self, in all things; and to learn to lead a truly *Christian, and Crucified Life*.

Even a Heathen could once say,

*Est Virtus placitis abstinuisse bonis.*

'Tis a Virtue to Abstain from pleasing things: And, shall we Christians know Nothing of it?

### IX.

I do it as an *Act of Faith*; that is, not doubting but that He that does *Encourage* it, will *Accept* it, and (as He is pleas'd to say himself) will *Reward it openly*. For, as PRAYER is the offering up my Soul to GOD; as ALMSGIVING is an offering up some of my Goods to GOD; so FASTING is an offering up some of my Body (I mean my Bodily Appetites) to GOD: And accordingly they are *all three* encourag'd together in one Chapter, St. Matt. vi.

X. I do

## X.

X. I do it because *Fasting inspirits my Repentance*, making it the more *sensible* and *pungent*, as being *Afflictive* and *Penal* to the Soul, and therefore helps it to a deep and tender *Resentment* of its *Iniquities*, for which reason *Times of Fasting and Penitence* were always joyn'd together : And if I have a mind, by *Afflicting my self* thus, to be able to say with *St. Paul*, (in some measure) *I am crucified with Christ*, (*Gal. ii. 20.*) no *Pious Men* sure will censure me, as you do, for this : And therefore I'll say with the same *Apostle*, (*Gal. vi. 17.*) *From henceforth let no Man trouble me*, if I have a mind thus to *bear in my Body the marks of the Lord Jesus*.

## XI.

XI. I do it because I would not be too *soft* and *tender* to endure *these Severities*, which *Christian Philosophy*

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teaches

teaches us to learn and practise, and by these lesser *Afflictions* and *Sufferings*, to endure *Hardships*, as good *Souldiers* of *Jesus Christ*, 2 *Tim.* ii. 3.

Furthermore, if I am angry at my self, for having in any thing displeased my G O D, and therefore humble my self with Fasting, you cannot reasonably be displeas'd either with the Discipline I give my self, or with the Argument I give for it.

If your Physician, at any time, should prescribe *Fasting*, as convenient or necessary for you, would you not observe it? Why then will you disgrace your Religion, in refusing to observe *those Times* of Abstinence and Fasting, which the Church, that hath the Care of our Souls, prescribes for your Soul's health and safety? Surely the Honour of your Religion obliges you to observe Her Commands in this, as in all other things.



## XII.

XII. I do it for another Reason : I often find my *Fasting*, and *Hunger* put me in mind (as they are very apt to do) of that *hungering and thirsting after Righteousness* which my Blessed LORD enjoys me. Nay, these Severities are so apt to put me upon my *Watch* and my *Guard*, that I cannot chuse but be the more tender and relenting, when I find that my thus afflicting my self naturally leads me to a serious Consideration of the Doctrine of the *Cross*; and, that 'tis not like one that *loves alway to serve his God, to study his Ease, and serve him with that which costs him Nothing.*

And methinks the practise of this Duty, as I observ'd before, fits and prepares me, both in Body and Mind, for the reception of this Apostolical Lesson, (*Acts xiv. 22.*) *That we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Besides, intermitting now and then a plentiful Meal, or a pleasant Treat, by my own Choice, helps to confirm me in all Virtues, and to fortifie my Soul in her other Resolutions to persevere in the practise of other Duties, which are very uneasie to Flesh and Blood.

## XIII.

XIII. I do it for another very great Reason: When I consider that our Saviour, when he found in his Heart to die for us, yet, in the greatness of his Compassion, could not find in his Heart to give us *Easier Terms* of Life, than such as do require *Contrition, Humiliation, and Amendment*: I do really think (and perhaps I find it true) that by thus Afflicting *my self* a little, I keep myself closer to these holy Exercises, as well as to my Devotions, and more easily bound my Desires within the Limits that GOD hath been pleas'd to set 'em.

## XIV.

## XIV.

XIV. I therefore do it too because I find, by Experience, that it constantly puts me in mind of my *Penitential Devotions*: For seeing you put me under a Necessity of speaking it, I assure you, that I think my self obliged never to pass a Day in the *Lent*, or any other Fast-days, without adding a Penitential Office to my other Daily Devotions; I mean the *Communion Prayers*; that is, the Fifty-first Psalm, and the three Prayers following it in the end of our Liturgy, to which I sometimes add the \*other Penitential Psalms.

## XV.

XV. I do it because it puts me in mind, and gives me a very tender Sense of the *Forty Days* and *Forty Nights* Fasting, and the other Sufferings of my dear Saviour: And

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\* Psal. vi, xxxii, xxxviii, cii, cxxx, cxliii.

methinks any thing that relates to the *Actions* or *Passions* by which he manifested his Love to us, enflames my Heart, raises my Affections, and helps me at the same time to conform my Will to His, especially in observing those Duties that are commanded by the Authority of the *Church*, and recommended by the Example of the best Christians among us, how small soever their number may be.

And tho' it is not consistent with the *Modesty*, *Piety*, or *Wisdom* of Men, of *Humility* and *Charity*, *Discipline* and *Consideration*, *Regularity* and *Order*, *Sincerity* and *Peace*, to transgress the Practise of the *Catholick*, and the Orders and Advices of their own *Mother-Church*; yet I find *by you*, it may be consistent with the Modesty of some Young Men of late and Latitudinarian Education, to villifie and decry, and cast Contempts and Slurrs on the *Usages of Both*: But from this I must desire to be excus'd.



## XVI.

XVI. And as it gave me a *tender Thought* of the *Forty Days* and *Forty Nights* Fasting of my Saviour, so it puts me in mind of the Mortified Lives and Wonderful Austerities of my Fore-fathers, in the best and purest Ages of Christianity : And altho' I am not able to do as these have done before me, shall I therefore do Nothing ? No ; this shall not ( I hope it shall not ) be objected against me, when the Coronets of Glory come to be distributed at the Resurrection. In the mean time of my stay here, it is Matter of Humiliation to me, to think how far short I am of those great Examples, and to say to my own Reproach, *Cur non possum quod isti, & istæ ?*

## XVII.

XVII. I do it for another Reason : It has been observ'd, that as a Man is never *more like a Brute*, than when over-

overwhelm'd with *Gluttony*, and *Drunkenness*; so he is never *more a Man*, than he is in his *Abstemious Days and Hours*. I will therefore bow the *Head*, and take the *Advice of the Church*, and by *Fasting*, or *Abstinence* keep my *Soul* as unclouded as I can, that it may with *Eagerness* aspire after that *Happy and Glorious State*, where we shall *hunger* no more, nor *thirst* any more.

Nor would I be of the number of those, who wholly despise *Days of Fasting*, and *Abstinence*, because they are in danger of *Sinning on with Ease*, without *Recollection* and *Check*, or being recall'd and interrupted, by a *Return to Rule and Discipline*, *Sober Thoughts*, *Regularity*, and *Order*.

But because some Men look upon *Days*, and *Times of Fasting*, and *Abstinence* with so much *Contempt*, I will here subjoyn the *Opinions of some of the Fathers concerning Fasting*, by giving you their *Characters* of it.

See

See but *their Thoughts* (if you will not hear their *Voice*) in these *Twenty* following Instances of *Recommendation*.

I could mention more, but these are enough for me, who plead for it; and too much for You, who deride and oppose it.

Fasting and Abstinence is,

*A Victory over Nature.*

*The Light of the Soul.*

*The Guard of the Mind.*

*The Gate of Religious Sorrow.*

*A \* Joyous Contrition.*

\* *Lata*  
*contritio.*

*The Guard of Obedience.*

*The Tranquility of the Mind.*

*The Gate of Paradise.*

*It clears the Mind.*

*It subjects the Flesh to the Spirit.*

*It makes us Humble and Contrite.*

*Dispels the Mists of Concupiscence.*

*It makes a Man acquainted with himself.*

*It makes the Spirit more resolv'd and firm.*

*'Tis the Vigour of the Mind.*

*It is the Wall of Chastity.*

*The Fortification of Modesty.*

*The Ornament of Life.*

*The Death of Vice,*

*And the Life of Virtue:*

Sir,



Sir, if but One of these be true, I think, a little Fasting or Abstinence is worth it.

## XVIII.

XVIII. I do it because I find a cheerful Pleasure in the midst of these *Ascetick Severities*: And I am convinc'd, that these Spiritual Comforts result from GOD's being well pleas'd with them, when they *proceed* from Faith or Repentance, Hatred of Sin, and Purity of Intention, Obedience or Love to GOD, or his Church. And while I design them (as I humbly do) to these Good Ends, and keep any Days, or Times of Fasting or Abstinence, with these pure Intendments and Intuitions; then sure, as I desire, so I will *rather* trust GOD with his Acceptance, than trust myself, Sir, with your Arguments to the contrary.

Here I'll Answer some of the best of 'em, and then proceed.

Ob-

i Objection.

'Tis Popery.

I answer :

There was *Fasting*, and *Abstinence*, yea, and *Lent* kept too, long before there was *Popery* in the Church of *Rome*.

2 Objection.

*That which goeth into the Mouth defileth not a Man*, St. Mark vii. 15.

I answer :

True ; 'tis not the *Meat* that defiles, but the *Disobedience* or *Impiety*. He that feasts when he should fast in Obedience to the *Church* ; he who feeds high, in contempt and derision of Her Orders, and the Practice of Saints in all Ages on a Fast-day, though that which goeth into the Mouth doth not defile him, yet his Disobedience, his  
Con-

Contempt, his Scorn, his Carelesness, and want of Consideration for his Soul, his Spirit of Pride, and Contradiction, his Immoderate Love of his Belly; defiles him all over, both in Body and Soul.

Sir, let me tell you, such a one is in the *Gall of Bitterness*; *his God is his Belly*; i. e. he is sensual, and minds Earthly things.

Secondly, Your Argument, if it proved any thing against Days and Times of Fasting and Abstinence, would equally conclude against *All Fast-days* whatever: Which you should have consider'd, who with so great Observance keep the Fast-days appointed by the State.

The meaning of that place you object, is this:

The Discourse in that Chapter was with the *Pharisees*, about Legal Uncleaness, and *eating with unwasht Hands*. Now, says our Saviour, (the Antitype of *Moses*, and Author of the New Evangelical Law) 'tis wicked Thoughts, Words, and Actions that

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defile a Man; not outward Legal Uncleanneſs, or the eating Meat with *unwaſhen Hands*, but inward Soul-Impurity. And therefore ſuffer me to tell you, That of all Men, it doth not become a Divine of our Church, ſo crudely and impertinently, like an Epicure, rather than a Chriſtian Prieſt, to alledge this Text againſt *Faſting*, which the Church of G O D, in all Ages, never thought contrary to the obſervation of Faſting Times.

3 Objection, from 1 *Tim.* iv. 3.

— *Commanding to abſtain from Meats which God hath created to be received with Thankſgiving.*

Answer.

There is no ſort of Meat that I abſtain from as *an Abomination*, or look upon as unlawful to be eaten, as the Jews, and Judaizing Gnoſticks, and other Hereticks did. And this, I conceive, is a ſufficient Answer to  
the



the Text, which you wrest from its true Sense, *against* the Observation of *Fasting Days*, and, by consequence, impeach the Practice of the *Catholick Church*.

If I abstain on a *Fast-day* from the *Quantity* or *Quality* of any Meats, that is not because I think any of them *Unlawful*, or *Unclean*, or *Abominable*, (for I eat any out of a *Fasting Day*) but because I would take what is least nourishing, and least gratifying the *Flesh* for that time, and most conduces to the great Ends for which *Times of Fasting* are enjoyn'd.

Thus (exactly according to the Apostolical Canon) I do it by way of *Exercise*, or *Self-denial*, not thinking any sort of Meat an *Abomination*.

ἡ ἀποκ-  
σις, ἡ δὲ δὲ  
βδελυγία  
Can. 50.

So that the Reason why I *abstain from Flesh* for a time (being not because I think the eating any to be an *Abomination* or *Pollution*, or any to be *unclean*, and *unlawful* to be eaten) amounts to this :

We can't abstain from all Food *Forty Days*, that's impossible; but we can abstain from what's the highest feeding, most nutritive, and most pleasing.

And by the way, Sir, whereas you object, eating delicious Fish, and drinking Wine, in *Lent*; I do not justifie those who dress their Fish deliciously, and drink Wine with it, if they can eat it safely without. But if *You* would but abstain from Flesh so long as *They* do, who (you say) eat delicious Fish, and drink Wine with it, you would then find such a difference, as would make you forbear to censure such Persons, and the Churches Indulgence to them.

There is a *Threefold Abstinence*  
à *Toto*, à *Tanto*, à *Tali*.

1. *A Toto*, from the Whole.
2. *A Tanto*, from the Full Quantity.
3. *A Tali*, from the High Quality.

The first we cannot do, that's impossible : The latter we can do ; and the Church *indulgently* accepts of the last.

And so, no doubt, will an *Indulgent Father*, when presented to Him from a *loving* and a *willing* Spirit ; from a Heart right towards Him, desirous to please Him ; from a Spirit that bows, and with humble *Love* desires to have no Prospect in the doing it, but the *encreasing*, *promoting*, or *demonstrating* its *Faith* or its *Repentance*, its *Hatred* of *Sin*, its *Purity of Intention*, its *Love* to GOD, and its *Obedience* to his Church.

#### 4 Objection.

To conclude your Objections ; *Bodily Exercise* (you say) *profiteth little*, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

I answer,

As I did before, This Objection reflects upon the Church in all Ages, as

if She understood not that Text, and therefore I think it becomes not one of her Priests' to object it against the Practise of Fasting.

But in the next place, I suppose, you'll grant, there is nothing really formidable but Sin; nothing so advantageous, so eligible, so *profitable* as Piety and Virtue; for *Godliness is profitable to all things*.

Now, when I have once secur'd (by Divine Grace) my Heart and my Guards within, my *Resolutions* and *Affections* for all the Parts and Instances of *direct* and *necessary Duty*; I will then consider that the Apostle says, *Bodily Exercise does indeed profit a little too*: And I'll not despise *that little*, because I am told (Ecclus. xix. 1.) *He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little*. And the same Saint [Paul] intimates, (1 Cor. ix. 27.) that without some *Self-denials* and *Macerations*, or bringing himself under by *denying himself* indifferent Liberties which he might enjoy, it may be possible  
even



even for an Apostle, to *Preach to others* and *be himself a Cast-away*.

## XIX.

XIX. I do it because I will accustom my self to *Live by Rule*: He that is a little circumspect and regular in this, and such-like pious Appointments of the Church, will be much more apt to be so in other things, and in Actions of greater moment and importance.

Almost the Whole of Christianity is indeed but a *Rule*; a Rule for the Government of our *Selves*, our *Lives* and *Actions*, our Thoughts and Words, our Passions and Affections towards G O D and Man,

And most certainly I find, that to *live by Rule*, in this Point of Fasting at *set and stated* times, puts me in mind, and helps, and prompts me to do so, in many other *Cases*, and *Instances* of *Devotion*, and *Obedience*.

## XX.

XX. I do it because I would accustom my self to *Passive Fortitude*; and by such *Training*, *Disciplining*, and *smaller Skirmishes*, to fit my self for *greater Combats*, if G O D please, in Times of Persecution, and for greater and nobler Instances of *Self-denial*, and *Suffering*, when there shall be occasion.

And certainly, to *kill* and *crucifie* the *Old Man*, and all its Lusts; to mortifie a belov'd Sin; to fight against Temptations; to do Violence to our selves; to live chastly; to refuse Worldly Pleasures, when they tempt beyond *Duty* or *Safety*; to take Pains in the Cause of Religion, the *Labour of Love*, and Mortification, is the way to lead such a crucified Life, as gives a great Aptness and Disposition even for Martyrdom it self.

XXI. I do

## XXI.

XXI. I do it because I find it has a *strange Efficacy* towards the making the Spirit *Resolv'd* and *Firm*. There is generally a *Levity*, and *Irresolution*; a *Looseness*, and *Dissolution* of Spirit in them that decry, reproach, and deride *Fasting*: And, I thank GOD, I find, by Experience the contrary, Effects of *Fasting*, and *Abstinence* in my Spirit, my Understanding, my Will, and my Affections.

So that as *I like* it the better for this my self, so I like the CHURCH the better, for appointing us such Times of Abstinence, and Fasting, and recommending to our Practise the observation of them; and the Practice of those that observe them shews, that keeping of 'em is not so difficult, or needless, as you imagine it to be.

Yet still I desire to be so humble, as not to *despise*, or *censure*, or *judge*, much less to *reproach* them who keep not *Fasting Days*; and at the same time am content

tent to be *despis'd, censur'd, and reproach'd* by them my self. And (by the Divine Aid) they shall find *my Spirit* so conformable to my *Outward Abstinence*, as to bear their *Censure* even to Derision, and Scorn, with Meekness, Gentleness, and Charity.

## XXII.

XXII. I do it for another Reason. As *Love* is the *Soul* of Christianity, and as *Suffering* is the *Soul* of Love, so, by a little chosen Suffering, I would offer up this little Instance of *my Love*; of my Love to G O D, and of my Love, and Obedience to his Church.

Upon this Head here are two things (to which the World is a Stranger) to be consider'd :

I. Our Suffering L O R D, in the great Work of our Redemption, was obliged to become a *Man of Sorrows*; and instead of being *crucified* with him a little, methinks 'tis too great an Unlikeness



likeness in his Followers to live a Life too delicate, without some Interruptions of *Self-denial* upon Election and Choice.

II. By our Fastings and Sufferings, we have a Capacity of serving God, beyond that of Angels.

And I do assure you, 'tis one part (as I think it) of my Happiness, that by keeping *Lent* to my utmost Ability, and *the Fridays-Fast*, I find an opportunity of exercising one *Passive Grace* more than you are aware of: I mean, I have the opportunity of bearing charitably, meekly, and temperately, the Reproaches, Censures, Revilings, and Derision that are cast upon me *by you*, and some others, for so doing: Pardon me, Sir, that I mention this again,

There may be a *Persecution* of the *Tongue*, as well as by Actions: And methinks when I am Persecuted, or suffer any of the Lashes of that Two-edg'd Sword, and receive the *Ar-*  
*rows*

*rows of bitter Words* for any thing that is *purely relative* to my Duty, in any Instance of Religion, and Precept of the Divine Law, I consider, that one of the Crosses which G O D hath allotted me to bear, as one of the sorts of Persecution for Righteousness, for which I shall have my Reward, according to the Promise of our Saviour, who said, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, &c. St. Matt. v. 11.*

And though the Sufferings of *Fasting*, and *Abstinence*, and of the Reproaches that befall me for them, be not so great in themselves, yet (as I before hinted) they are a Preparation for greater Sufferings, and for bearing Troubles, and Persecutions of the most terrible sort to Flesh, and Blood, without Fear, or Reluctance.

And that's another thing the World is not acquainted with; I mean, the Advantage of *Sufferings*, *Persecutions*, and *Afflictions* for the Cause of God, the sake of Religion, and for the keeping close, especially, to any  
known

*known Duty ; or what's purely relative to it.*

Such Sufferings, Persecutions, and Afflictions,

*Prove our Patience and Sincerity.*

*They make us Wise and Firm in our  
Department.*

*They enlarge the Spiritual Man.*

*They raise the Soul.*

*They strengthen our Spirit and harden our Virtue.*

*They fortifie our Hope.*

*They compleat our Experience.*

*They are the Farnace in which acceptable Men are try'd.*

*They demonstrate our Love.*

*They*

*They make us keep the stricter Guard  
upon our Actions.*

*And they put on us the Livery of Christ.*

These are the Advantages of Afflictions, Sufferings or Persecutions for a truly Religious Cause: And for such Sufferings and Afflictions, the Disciplin of *Fastings*, and *Abstinence* fits, and prepares the Spirit of Man; as the Practice of the Primitive Christians shew, who were always in readiness for the *Sword*, the *Gibbets*, or the *Beasts*.

### XXIII.

XXIII. By such holy Austerities (rightly tempered) I keep my *Infirmities* from climbing, and growing up into Crimes. They are like a seasonable Check at the first appearance of a Temptation; a little thing will dash it to pieces at first. But if by *Parley* and *Approaches*, by *Curiosity* and *Indulgence*,



gence, by *Carelesness* and *Negligence* we give way, this is of dangerous Consequence: And no wise Man will venture to court Danger, or converse with it, or love to put away his Guards from him. And, Sir, without some Fasting, and Discipline, give me leave to tell you, you'll be apt to yeild to the Pleasures, and Allurements of the three great Tempters, which by your Baptismal Vow you are obliged to resist.

## XXIV.

XXIV. I do it because nothing is more Brutal than to be abandoned to Appetite: Nothing greatens a Man more than our Victories over it.

Abstinence exalts a Man above the lower Sphære of Sense. And when *Fasting*, and *Alms* are joyn'd with our *Penitential Devotions*, these raise the value of Gods Service, and keep Religion in esteem and veneration, and from being thought a cheap and vulgar thing, and such as costs us nothing but

but the expense of a little Time and Breath. To conclude, Let you and I review these things, and for a while let each *Commune with his own heart and be still.* Ps. iv. 4.

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